DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 198 434 CG 014 968

AUTHOR Frost, Martha E.
TITLE Toward Understanding the Needs of College Students Who Delay Entrance.
PUB DATE Sep 80
NOTE 15p.: Paper presented at the Annual Convention of the American Psychological Association (88th, Montreal, Quebec, Canada, September 1-5, 1980).

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Academic Persistence: Adjustment (to Environment): Adult Dropouts: *Adult Students: *College Attendance: *College Students: Counseling Services: Higher Education: *Motivation: Postsecondary Education: *Reentry Students: Sex Differences: Student Adjustment: Student Attrition: Student Needs

ABSTRACT

Recently there has been an increase in the enrollment of older students in post-secondary institutions. Among these students is a group of delayed entrants who have not gone directly from high school to the university. Motivation seems to be an important factor in the decision to return to school and to subsequent success. Personal interviews conducted in 1975 with 34 men and 35 women who had delayed entering college provided measures of motivation for academic success. Information taken from these students' transcripts in 1979 was used to determine their progress. Only 42% were termed successful (had graduated or were still enrolled in school). Success was related to greater career orientation to college, ability to predict dropping out, and having translated long-range goals into a viable major. All of the successful men had graduated while many of the successful women were still enrolled. Although women do better academically than men, they are not graduating within the four-year time span they set for themselves. Delayed entrants cited "not fitting in" as their biggest problem area, followed by rusty study habits, financial problems, and family responsibilities. A number of special counseling services could benefit older students. (Author/NRB)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED198434

Toward Understanding the Needs of College Students Who Delay Entrance

Martha E. Frost
University of Washington

Abstract

Personal interviews conducted in 1975 with 34 men and 35 women who delayed entering college provided measures of motivation for academic success. Four years later, only 42% had graduated or were still enrolled in school. "Success" was related to greater career orientation to college, ability to predict dropping out, and having translated long-range goals into a viable major. The students' suggestions for improving their advising are summarized.

CG 014968

U S DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Martha E. Frost

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC).

Toward Understanding the Needs of College Students Who Delay Entrance

In recent years there has been an increase in older students enrolling in post-secondary institutions. Among these older students is a group of delayed entrants, people who have not gone directly from high school to the University. Why do they delay? What motivates them to return to school? Do they have special needs? How do they fare over a 4-year period?

Motivation, particularly in a vocational sense, seems to be an important factor in the decision to return to school and to subsequent success (Lunneborg, Olch and de Wolf, 1974; de Wolf, 1974; Ferguson, 1966; Roelf, 1975). Other factors related to success of older students are choice of major (Lunneborg, Olch & de Wolf, 1974; de Wolf & Lunneborg, 1972), sex (Holmstrom, 1973), and sources of financial support (Erickson, Kimmel, Murphy & Newcomer, 1976).

In the present study success was measured by the student's having graduated or still being enrolled in school four years after entrance. It was predicted that students who were more career oriented, and thus more motivated, would be more successful. While it was expected that women would have higher grades, it was predicted that the men would be closer to actually achieving a degree. Finally students who did not have to work (had savings, supported by spouse or parents, scholarship) were expected to be more successful than students who worked either part or full time.

Method: A Return to Education Survey constructed by Lunneborg and de Wolf on the basis of their previous research was administered to 69 first or second quarter undergraduate students at the University of Washington by personal interview Spring 1975. They were 20 years of age

or older at the time of entrance and had not accumulated more than 44 credits at another college.

On the basis of the work of Lunneborg, Olch & de Wolf (1974) five variables were chosen to measure motivation. These included whether entrance to the university was a major crisis or turning point, the number of career-oriented reasons a student gave for returning to school, how specific future career goals were (measured by student indicating a job title in an open-ended question on career goals), degree aspirations, and how likely the student felt was the chance of interrupting studies prior to completing the bachelor's. Information was also gathered on the sources of their income and background characteristics. Open-ended questions dealt with the major problems they anticipated in college.

In Autumn quarter 1979 the students' transcripts were examined to determine their progress. Information taken from their transcripts included cumulative GPA (CUM GPA), whether they had graduated or were currently enrolled, and their major. Chi-square and t-tests were used where appropriate to determine the significance of the motivational and background predictors in relation to success.

Thirty-four of the subjects were male with an average age of 23 years; the 35 women entered with a mean age of 25 years. (Age range, 20-49.) The students had worked an average of 5.7 years with a minimum of zero to a maximum of 19 years. The men were evenly split in marital status between single and married, while most of the women (22) were single, 4 divorced, 1 remarried and 8 married. The subjects predicted it would take them an average of 4 years to complete a bachelor's degree. (Table 1).

Results: Twenty-nine of the 69 students were successful, i.e., had graduated or were still in school Autumn 1979. Fifteen successfuls were female. Six of the women had graduated and nine were still enrolled in school in contrast to the men, all of whom had graduated. Thus, while the predicted sex difference did not occur, the women were farther away from the ultimate goal than the men. (Table 3).

In accord with prediction, the mean GPA for the women was 3.07, for the men 2.70 (significant at the .05 level). Incidentally, GPA was positively related to success ($p = .001$), but while it was significant for the men, it was not for the women ($p = .12$). (Table 3).

Major choice was related to success in the following way: 24 of 26 premajors (no major) were not successful, while only 16 of 43 who had majors were not successful. Contrary to prediction, work status was not a significant factor in success. (Tables 4 and 5).

As for the motivational measures, neither entrance as a turning point, nor specificity of vocational goal, nor degree aspirations were related to success. In fact, almost all of the students (50) had specific vocational goals. However, students with a higher number of career-oriented reasons for attending school (1.7 vs. 1.2) were significantly more successful ($p = .001$). Students were also pretty good judges of their chances of interrupting their studies before they had completed their bachelor's. As a group, students who predicted they had a great chance of interrupting their studies were less successful ($p = .03$), and the men were better at predicting their success than the women. (Table 2).

Discussion: The prediction that men would be more successful than women is partially supported in that the men had all actually graduated,

while many of the "successful" women were still in school. Perhaps the finding in previous research showing men as more successful than women is because success is often measured by graduation. If women are only able to go to school on a part-time basis they would then not be counted as successes in a four year follow-up. As predicted the women did have higher GPA's than men, but the men's grades were related to their success, while women's grades were not. Thus, while women are doing better academically, they are not graduating within the four year time frame they set for themselves.

Subjects who had not declared a major in four years were less successful indicating that while most of the students had specific career goals, unless these were translated into a major course of study, these goals were not realized. What is not known is why they were not able to find a suitable program of study.

Work status did not seem to make a difference to this group. However, in comments solicited on major problems at the University, financial problems were frequently cited.

The measures of motivation produced a mixed bag of results. While number of career-oriented reasons for attending the University was related to success, specificity of career choice was not, due probably to the small number of people who gave no specific choice.

Conclusions: It seems that the majority (58%) of this sample who delayed their entrance to the University came with a fairly clear idea of their long-range goals and yet did not succeed. What were the reasons? Did they have special needs and problems? What kinds of improvement in academic counseling services might help?

In an open ended question on what the student saw as her/his biggest problem area, one of the most common was that of "not fitting in." "Inability to fit in due to frustration, apathy, loneliness and despair." "General feeling that those fresh out of high school are more idealistic, while I am more realistic. Consequently makes it hard to fit in with them." Other responses included concerns over rusty study skills and habits, unstable financial situations, and family responsibilities. "Learning how to study again--getting back in the habit of school." "Uncertain of future sources of money." "Family responsibilities sometimes keep me from studying and getting free time."

Students were also asked which areas of the University (i.e., Career Planning and Placement, Advising, Financial Aide, degree requirements, housing, etc.) could be improved. Advising and orientation were cited most frequently. When asked to elaborate on the area most in need of improvement the bulk of the suggestions seemed to focus on better communication and more awareness on the part of advisors of the varied background of these 'not so average' students. "The program I wish to pursue is a 'combination' of 2 or 3 departments, a spreading out that my present advisor does not approve of or encourage." "When you are just assigned to Arts and Sciences your advisors just give you anything. They don't take the time to see if it is going to help you in your goal." Overall the message was that it's hard to find information in such a big school and resource lists and centralized information should be available.

It would seem that delayed entrance students could benefit from a number of special counseling services. Support groups could be sponsored to help these students find a peer group and benefit from the experiences

of others. Study skills courses should be available especially for them. Orientation groups could be offered in which specific issues related to the older student are addressed including resources on campus and relevant courses. To help with the complaint of irrelevant and lower level coursework, advisors could review courses for appropriateness to students with a richer background.

Because of the trend for more older students to enter universities, advisors and counselors will be seeing more of this population. To best help them counselors need to look at the unique problems of this group and offer activities to raise the percentage who are "successful."

TABLE 1

BACKGROUND CHARACTERISTICS OF 69 DELAYED ENTRANTS

	Females	Males	Total
Total number	35	34	69
$\bar{X}$ number of years estimated to complete degree	4	4	4
$\bar{X}$ number of years worked	5.9	5.4	5.7
$\bar{X}$ age	25.9	23.5	24.7
Marital status			
Single	22	17	39
Divorced	4	0	4
Remarried	1	0	1
Married	8	17	25
Sources of financial support			
Working	26	19	45
Not working	9	15	24

TABLE 2

MOTIVATION VARIABLES AND SUCCESS

	Successful			Unsuccessful		
	female	male	total	female	male	total
Vocational Goals						
General	2	2	4	1	6	7
Specific	12	11	23	16	11	27
No response			8			
Entering during a crisis						
Yes	6	10	16	13	8	21
No	7	4	11	7	12	19
No response			2			
Degree Aspirations						
BA	5	3	8	5	10	15
MA	6	8	14	8	5	13
PhD	4	3	7	7	5	12
$\bar{X}$ number of career oriented reasons for entering	1.8	1.6	1.7*	1.2	1.2	1.2
Prediction of interrupting studies						
No chance	4	6	10**	4	3	7
Little chance	7	8	14	8	8	16
Great chance	4	0	4	8	9	17

*p=.001
**p=.02

TABLE 3

SEX AND SUCCESS

	Females	Males	Total
Success			
Graduated	6	14	20
Enrolled	9	0	9
Withdrawn	20	20	40
GPA	3.08*	2.73	2.90**
$\bar{X}$ number of credits earned	112	120.3	116
$\bar{X}$ number of quarters enroiled	9.2	8.8	9.0

*p=.04
**p=.002

TABLE 4

MAJOR CHOICE AND SUCCESS

	Successful			Unsuccessful		
	female	male	total	female	male	total
Premajor	2	0	2	10	14	24*
Humanities	4	0	4	6	0	6
Social Sciences	5	4	9	3	2	5
Natural Sciences	2	8	10	1	4	5
Business	2	2	2	0	0	0

*p=.001

TABLE 5

SOURCES OF SUPPORT AND SUCCESS

	Successful			Unsuccessful		
	female	male	total	female	male	total
Working	11	6	17	15	13	28
Not working	4	8	12	5	7	12

References

de Wolf, V. and Lunneborg, P. W. Descriptive information on over-35 undergraduate students. University of Washington, Bureau of Testing (139), 1972.

de Wolf, V. Non-intellective descriptors and predictors of undergraduate success: A brief review of the recent literature. University of Washington, Educational Assessment Center (282), 1974.

Erickson, L., Kimmel, E. W., Murphy, M. T., and Newcomer, W. J. Back to school--The older-than-average student. College and University, 1976, 51, 679-692.

Ferguson, M. A. Adult students in an undergraduate university. Journal of College Student Personnel, 1966, 7, 345-348.

Holmstrom, E. I. "Older" freshman: Do they differ from "typical" undergraduates? American Council on Education, Office of Research, Vol. 8, No. 7, 1973.

Lunneborg, P. W., Olch, D. R., and de Wolf, V. Prediction of college performance in older students. Journal of Counseling Psychology, 1974, 21, 215-221.

Roelfs, P. J. Teaching and counseling older college students. Findings, 1975, 2, 5-8.

Expanded
References

Barbier, M.N. Counseling the mature woman. Adult Leadership, 1971, 20, 187-189, 200.

Bishop, J. and Van Dyk, J. Can adults be hooked on college? Some determinants of adult college attendance. The Journal of Higher Education, 1977, 48, 39-62.

Brandenburg, J.B. The needs of women returning to school. Personnel and Guidance Journal, 1974, 53, 11-18.

Brooks, L. Supermoms shift gears: Re-entry women. The Counseling Psychologist, 1976, 6 (2), 33-37.

Cagaiano, A., Geisler, M., and Wilcox, L. The academic performance of returning adult students. The College Board Review, Winter 1977-78, 106, 13-16.

de Wolf, V. and Lunneborg, P.W. Descriptive information on over-35 undergraduate students. University of Washington, Bureau of Testing (139), 1972.

Elshof, A.T. and Konek, C. Providing a re-entry bridge for women: A need-centered continuing education program. Adult Leadership, 1977, 28, 239-245.

Erickson, L., Kimmel, E.W., Murphy, M.T., and Newcomer, W.J. Back to school--The older-than-average student. College and University, 1976, 51, 679-692.

Ferguson, M.A. Adult students in an undergraduate university. The Journal of College Student Personnel, 1966, 7, 345-348.

Giles, W.E. The adult student in higher education. Adult Leadership, 1973, 22, 50-53.

Gilford, D.M. Statistical snapshots of adult continuing education. The Journal of Higher Education, 1975, XLVI, 409-426.

Hiltunen, W.A. Adults as college freshmen. The Journal of College Student Personnel, 1965, 6, 208-211.

Holmstrom, E.I. "Older" freshmen: Do they differ from "typical" undergraduates? American Council on Education, Office of Research, Vol. 8, No. 7, 1973.

Hurkampa, R., Dube, W.F., Lytle, D.B., Ryan, J.W., Wiggs, G.D. and McMurdock, A.W. Admission of older applicants. College and University, 1976, 51, 508-519.

Jackson, F.H. The adult learning society: New needs, new standards? The College Board Review, Winter 1978-79, 110, 14-17.

Jensen, G.S. Will adult education come of age? The College Board Review, Winter 1977-78, 106, 8-12.

Johnson, D.H., Wallace, K.W. and Sedlacek, W.E. A comparison of the needs of returning and traditional students by sex. Journal of NAWDAC, 1979, 43, 14-18.

Kasworm, C.E. Student services for the older undergraduate student. Journal of College Student Personnel, 1980, 21, 163-169.

Kohen, A.I., Nestel, G., and Karmas, C. Factors affecting individual persistence rates in undergraduate college programs. American Educational Research Journal, 1978, 15, 233-252.

Krings, D. Meeting the counseling needs. Adult Leadership, 1976, 24, 311-313.

Lance, L.M., Lourie, J. and Mayo, C. Needs of re-entry university students. The Journal of College Student Personnel, 1979, 20, 479-485.

Letchworth, G.E. Women who return to college: An identity-integrity approach. The Journal of College Student Personnel, 1970, 11, 103-106.

Lunneborg, P.W. and Lunneborg, C.E. Relation of delayed entrance to college achievement. Journal of Counseling Psychology, 1967, 14, 390-391.

Lutz, D.A. Who are the new nontraditional learners? The College Board Review, 1978, 109, 26-30.

Merideth, E. and Merideth, R. Adult women's education: A radical critique. Journal of NAWDC, 1971, 35, 111-120.

Miller, R.H. A decade of data on adult learners. The College Board Review, Winter 1979-80, 114, 16-17.

Morstain, B.R and Smart, J.C. A motivational typology of adult learners. Journal of Higher Education, 1977, 46, 656-679.

Munday, L.A. College access of nontraditional students. Journal of Higher Education, 1976, XLVII, 681-699.

Nisbet, J. and Welsh, J. The mature student. Educational Research, 1972, 14, 204-207.

Powell, J. and Rodgers, A. Orientation to college: Meeting the needs of mature women. The Journal of College Student Personnel, 1975, 16, 432.

Rawlins, M.E. Life made easier for the over-thirty undergrads. The Personnel and Guidance Journal, 1979, 58, 139-143.

Reed, J.G and Murphy, M.T. Academic performance of mature adults and veterans. College and University, 1975, 50, 129-143.

Roelfs, P.J. Teaching and counseling older college students. Findings, 1975, 2, 215-221.

Sikula, R.A. Can the academically underpreparted adult complete university courses successfully? College Student Journal, 1979, 13, 5-8.

Smallwood, K.B. What do adult women college students really need? The Journal of College Student Personnel, 1980, 21, 65-73.

Sturtz, S.A. Age differences in college student satisfaction. The Journal of College Student Personnel, 1971, 12, 220-222.

Valentine, J.A. The liberal arts college and the experienced learner. The College Board Review, 1974, 93, 10-17.

Von der Embse, T.J. and Childs, J.M. Adults in transition: A profile of the older college student. The Journal of College Student Personnel, 1979, 20, 475-479.